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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4508  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2320  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2185  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2756  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0932  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3074  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001494

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MORE ON DUAL CITIZENSHIP STORY

REF: A) ASHGABAT 1490 B) ASHGABAT 1371

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: An October 31 Russian press article re-ignited a controversy that has been brewing in recent months about dual citizens' inability to obtain the new, high-tech Turkmen travel passport that the government began issuing in July. Two days later, the Turkmen MFA fired back an angry press statement, calling the article a "provocation" meant to ruin the bilateral relationship, but its response did not attempt to correct the record. A second Russian article appeared, challenging the legal basis of the Turkmen government's de facto passport policy. The Turkmen Migration Service is staying out of the controversy, telling dual citizen applicants to direct inquiries to the MFA. The Russian embassy here, apparently hesitant to do or say anything to aggravate the Turkmen government or put relations at risk, has offered to assist anyone who wants to renounce their Russian citizenship. The continued confusion and run-around concerning dual citizens' attempts to obtain new-style passports lends credence to earlier suspicions that the government will withhold issuance of the new travel passport from dual citizens. END SUMMARY.

RUSSIAN PRESS REIGNITES PASSPORT ISSUE

¶2. (SBU) The amended constitution that Turkmenistan adopted on September 26 maintained the provision barring dual citizenship. While previous iterations of the constitution had also contained this article, it was not enforced. Dual nationals resident in Turkmenistan have become concerned, because they have lived here as Turkmen citizens, but often used their foreign (primarily Russian) passports to travel to Russia and other countries.

¶3. (SBU) On October 31, Russian newspaper "Vremya Novostey" reported on the Turkmen government's apparent refusal to issue new Turkmen foreign travel passports to dual citizens. The article argued that Turkmen authorities are using the passport issue as an opportunity to "softly" urge ethnic Russians to leave Turkmenistan or force them to give up Russian citizenship. Current dual citizens have until 2013, when use of the current Turkmen passport will expire, to acquire the new travel passport or else, in effect, lose their Turkmen citizenship. New migration regulations (Ref A) probably make it easier for them to acquire residency status. (NOTE: The Turkmen government probably has no comprehensive means of knowing whether a Turkmen citizen has dual citizenship other than by his own

admission. END NOTE.)

#### TURKMEN MFA SAYS RUSSIAN PRESS "CLEARLY DISTORTED"

14. (SBU) On November 2, the Turkmenistan MFA issued an angry press statement criticizing the article in the Russian newspaper, stating that it "clearly distorted internal state procedure for the issuance of the new foreign passport." Although the MFA called the article "a provocation aimed at creating an atmosphere of distrust between two friendly nations," it did not deny the fact that new passports were not being issued to dual citizens, other than to say that passport procedures would be carried out "in accordance with national and international law."

15. (SBU) Another "Vremya Novostey" article appeared on November 6 arguing that the Turkmen government has no legal basis for discriminating against Turkmen citizens who legitimately acquired Russian citizenship before April 2003, when Turkmenistan withdrew from the bilateral Russian-Turkmen agreement on dual citizenship. These citizens, as well, should be able to obtain new Turkmen passports. The author of the articles, Russian journalist Arkadiy Dubnov, is a former resident of Ashgabat, and is unofficially "persona non-grata" because of his previous criticisms of the government. In July 2008, he was refused a Turkmen visa when he sought to travel to Turkmenistan as a member of the press accompanying Russian President Medvedev during his official visit.

#### NO COMMENT FROM RUSSIAN EMBASSY

16. (SBU) In recent weeks, the Russian Embassy here has been mum on  
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the subject of dual citizens, in spite of the fact that there are more than 100,000 Russian dual citizens living in Turkmenistan. Russian diplomats, however, recently posted a four-page form on their public information board outside the embassy that provides dual citizens with information on how to renounce their Russian citizenship. (NOTE: On the sample form, Russian diplomats provided suggested wording for the reason the applicant is giving up his Russian citizenship: "To acquire Turkmen citizenship." Dual citizens using the form are unlikely to use that wording. END NOTE.)

#### LOCALS CONCERNED

17. (SBU) Local Embassy staff who have dual citizenship reported that although they can use their current Turkmenistan passports to travel abroad until 2013, they expect to run into trouble when their passport pages are full. The Turkmen government does not add blank pages to existing passports. Local staff also said the Migration Service began advising some dual citizens who were waiting for word on their new travel passports to instead renew their regular passports, in order to travel abroad in the near future. (NOTE: The regular passport is issued by the MFA, rather than the Migration Service. END NOTE.)

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The continued confusion and run-around concerning dual citizens' attempts to obtain new-style passports lends credence to earlier suspicions that the government has adopted a de facto policy not to issue the new passport to dual citizens. The MFA's public response did not address the substance of the articles' charges, nor did it offer an alternative reason to explain the situation. Whether the ultimate goal is to force people to choose a single citizenship or to force Russian citizens to travel only on their Russian passports, one likely result will be the further alienation of local ethnic Russians. END COMMENT.

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